

REMARKS

In the present Amendment, Claim 1 has been amended for purposes of clarity and to incorporate the subject matter of the reinforcing member recited by Claim 3. Claims 3, 6 and 7 have been canceled herein. New Claims 8-12 have been added. Support is found, for example, in originally filed Claims 1-7, FIGS. 1-10 of the present application and the corresponding disclosure. No new matter has been added, and entry of the Amendment is respectfully requested. Upon entry of the Amendment, Claims 1, 2 and 8-12 will be pending.

Applicants point out to the Examiner that the listing of claims of the present application has been amended herein to be placed consistent with the granted claims of the copending Japanese application, now Japanese Patent No. 4028759.

Referring to pages 2 and 3 of the Office Action, Claims 1-3 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112 as allegedly being indefinite.

Applicants traverse and respectfully request the Examiner to reconsider in view of the following remarks and the amendments to the claims.

As set forth above, without conceding to the merits of the rejection, the present claims have been amended consistent with the granted claims of the copending Japanese application. Applicants submit that the amended claims are clear and definite.

For the Examiner's further understanding, referring to FIG. 1 of the present application, beam-side joint **A** joins a column **10** and a beam **20**, and column-side joint **B** joins a column **10** and the first beam **20**. In addition, while it is clear that in FIG. 1 the beam **20** is common to both the beam-side joint **A** and the column-side joint **B**, the present application is not in any way limited to embodiments wherein the joints share one of the column or the beam in common.

In view of the above, reconsideration and withdrawal of the Section 112, second paragraph, rejection of Claims 1-3 are respectfully requested.

Referring to page 4 of the Office Action, Claims 1-3 and 7 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as allegedly being anticipated by Japanese Patent Application No. 11-324129 (the '129 reference).

Applicants traverse and respectfully request the Examiner to reconsider in view of the following remarks and the amendments to the claims.

As set forth above, without conceding to the merits of the rejection, the present claims have been amended consistent with the granted claims of the copending Japanese application.

In addition, Applicant addresses the disclosure of the '129 reference in the present specification and, therein, present reasons why the present claimed invention is patentable over the disclosure of the '129 reference. (*See* Specification at p. 1, line 21 to p. 2, line 4.) For example, the '129 reference fails to teach a dry joint structure, which need not be welded, for a column-side joint. On the contrary, the column-side joint taught by the '129 reference employs a horizontal stiffener that is first welded to the column, and then the end of the beam is joined to the horizontal stiffener. This technique not only leads to the possibility that the column may be bent due to the welding, but also requires that a special device be used for welding.

The Examiner, however, takes the position that FIGS. 1-3 of the '129 reference disclose a column-side joint within the scope of the present claims. Applicants respectfully disagree.

The Examiner cites FIGS. 1-3 of the '129 reference as disclosing a joint structure for joining a column 11 to a beam 12 comprising a reinforcing member 30 joined in a cross section (defined by surfaces 11A, 11B and 11C) of the column by a bolt 41, 42, and an end of the beam 12/13 is joined with the reinforcing member by a bolt 41, 42, the reinforcing member having end

plates 31, 32 and a groove type connecting member/plate having left and right stiffener members 33 (see CM in the annotated figure provided on page 5 of the Office Action), the end plates being joined to flanges of the column by a bolt.

Applicants disagree with the Examiner's characterization of the '129 reference.

In particular, the Examiner refers to FIGS. 1-3 of the '129 reference as having a "a groove type connecting member/plate having left and right stiffener members." However, the present claims recite that "the connecting member has a groove-type plate (33) disposed at a central portion as a connecting member connecting the first and the second end plates, and stiffener plates (35) disposed at left and right opposite outer sides of the first and second end plates." (See Claim 1 with reference characters from FIG. 2 of the present application added for the Examiner's further understanding.)

The '129 reference fails to disclose or suggest a similar structure.

In view of the above, reconsideration and withdrawal of the Section 102 rejection of Claims 1-3 and 7 are respectfully requested.

Referring to pages 5 and 6 of the Office Action, Claim 6 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as allegedly being unpatentable over the '129 reference.

Without conceding to the merits of the rejection, Claim 6 has been canceled herein.

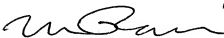
Withdrawal of the Section 103 rejection of Claim 6 is deemed proper.

Reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited.

If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the local, Washington, D.C., telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,



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